4: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FL11 Luo FL11

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Collotype H. KLEINMANN & Co Photo by WEISCH, Nairobi

Kavirondo natives of Kitotos
Nilotic group or Ja-luo

The centre figure is an unmarried girl: the figures to right and left are married women
(Note decorated goat skin, sign of marriage)

[End plate VI]

5: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11
Bantu Kavirondo FL4

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Arabchebki, Lumbwa Chief.

Oduu : Kisumu Chief (Ja-Luo).

Gusungishu Warrior (Moran).

Ugada, Kisumu Chief (Ja-Luo).

Cp 358 AJ

5: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11
Bantu Kavirondo FL4

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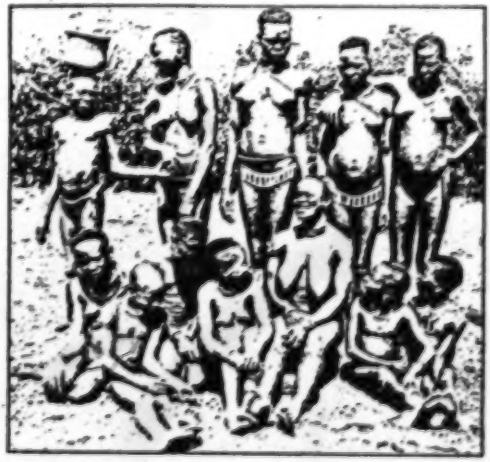
Jaluo Girl ; Kajulu Tribe.

Lumbwa Woman and Young Girl.

Ketosh Woman (N. Bantu).



Kisumu Girls.

[p. 358 B]

5: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11

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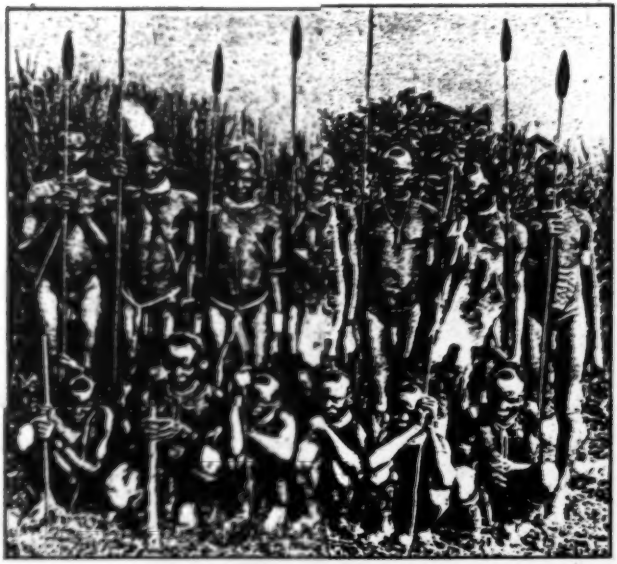

Kavirondo Warriors.

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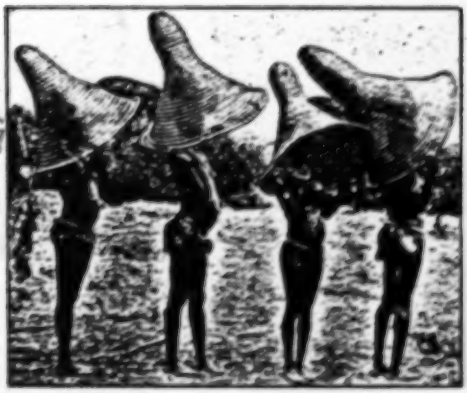

Fisherwomen; Kisumu.

Karunga Warriors (Ja-Luo).

[p.358]

10: Roscoe M-5 (ca. 1900)1915
FL11 Luo FL11

CHAPTER XXV

THE NILOTIC KAVIRONDO AND THEIR COUNTRY, GOVERNMENT, MARRIAGE, BIRTH AND PUBERTY

The tribe and their district—origin of the tribe—chiefs as rulers—land tenure—the local chief as the magistrate of his village—courts and court fees—making peace between two sections of the tribe—theft—adultery—murder—inheritance—marriage customs—distinctive dress of married women—birth customs—birth of twins—initiation at puberty.

The tribe and their district. The Nilotic Kavirondo are so named to distinguish them from the Bantu tribes of Kavirondo. They are a branch of the great family known as Nilotic tribes or tribes of the Nile Valley, and are quite distinct in language and custom from Bantu tribes. This particular branch may be found extending southwards from Mount Elgon along the coast of Lake Victoria Nyanza into German territory. They are settled in groups of villages among the Bantu and yet are quite distinct from them and do not intermarry with them. The clans met with live chiefly in the hills bordering on Lake Victoria. The mornings and 291 evenings are comparatively cold in these hills, yet the people are absolutely destitute of clothing; indeed they consider clothing as indecent, and members who have been abroad and have adopted clothing are requested to put it away during their residence in their old homes. The features of the people ● 142 are more closely allied to those of the pastoral tribes than to the Bantu. In stature the men are not, however, quite so tall as the Bahima, few of them reach six feet, five feet six to five feet eight being more usual. Their frame is slim like that of the Bahima, and the nose inclined to have a bridge. Again their love for cows is stronger than that of the Bantu. The women are shorter than the men, they are slim and athletic, a stout woman being seldom found; this may be accounted for by the amount of exercise they take and their constant activity in the field and home.

[p. 275]
[pp. xi-xii, 1-274 not processed]

10: Roscoe M-5 (ca. 1900)1915
FL11 Luo FL11
Bantu Kavirondo FL4

Plate XXII

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(1) Nilotic Kavirondo girls

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(2) Young women ready for initiation ceremony
(*Bagesu Tribe*)

[facing p. 276]

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

near the entrance to the village, so that they can watch over any attempt to steal cattle. The hut which is directly opposite the gate of the village is usually that of the principal wife of the village head-man. There is much the same superstition as among the Bantu Kavirondo about shutting the door of a house behind a person who has just left it.

Unmarried men go naked. Married men who have children wear a

GIRL, HUSBAND AND WIFE, JO-LUO

small piece of goat skin, which, though quite inadequate for purposes of decency, is, nevertheless, a very important thing in etiquette; for a married man with a child must on no account call on his mother-in-law without wearing this piece of goat skin. To call on her in a state of absolute nudity would be regarded as a serious insult, only to be atoned for by the payment of goats. Even if under the new dispensation a man

[i.e., a very bad one; more the Bantu equivalent to divorce (if it occurs between husband and wife. (See p. 782-not pleasant). -Rudyard]

14: Johnston G-4. 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

29% wears European trousers, he must have a piece of goat skin underneath. 5% Unmarried girls wear no clothes. Married women wear a tail of strings

[301 of 42]

[illegible]

behind. When they go to visit another village, they don a goat skin slung from the shoulder, upon which a curious and rather pretty pattern has been burnt with a red-hot stick. When a woman is married, she puts on

14: Johnston G-4. 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

301 "ayalun." It is thought by some authorities that these have wandered down in past ages from the direction of Egypt—in fact, some of the

A JO-LUO MAN WITH BAD TEETH

more northern Nilotic peoples declare that they came from the north or north-east. I imagine that the original possessors of these beads made considerable settlements in the neighbourhood of the Maraguiin Hills,

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

and that the beads were constantly being dropped and lost in the fields. After floods the loosened soil might expose to sight some of the beads which had thus been dropped or thrown away. The supply of these blue

439. A JA-LUO MAN WITH EAR-RINGS

beads is, of course, quite inadequate for the population, and many are making up for the scarcity now by using the ordinary blue beads of commerce.

The Ja-luo men often wear an armlet of threaded cylindrical wooden

14: Johnston G-4.5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

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[p.786]

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Loc FL11

hut until the child begins to cut its teeth. The mother does not go out to cultivate for nine days after the birth. If a woman has had two children previously who have died, she follows the same ceremony as that described among the Bantu Kavirondo. When the child has been brought back by an old woman, it is redeemed by the father, who then bores the lobe of the right ear and inserts an ear-ring of brass wire. The child is thenceforth called "Owiti," if a boy; if a girl, "Awiti," meaning "the child that has been thrown away." The old woman who picks up the child is regarded as its foster-mother. Twins are considered lucky, though their arrival is attended by a good many ceremonies and by propitiatory dances which are of an obscene nature.

When a person dies, the corpse is immediately taken out of the house. If it be a woman, her brothers-in-law dig the grave in the verandah of the house. The corpse is buried on its left side with the hand under the head. In the case of a woman's death, her relatives and friends come and wail. Her husband presents each one that attends with a goat. The mourners stay for three days. The hut in which a person has died is used for a month. The neighbours then meet together and drink beer, and the house is broken down. Upon the death of a man his brother digs his grave, and he is buried in the house of his first wife, if she is still living. If she is dead, he is buried in the verandah of his own house. Men only wail for one day. After that only the women wail, at first for three days, and then at dawn for fifteen days.

As a sign of mourning the women wear a string of beans tied round the forehead. They also wear a black tail fringed with white strings for about a month. Others smear themselves with white earth. Relatives of

16: Northcote G-5 (no date) 1907 FL11 Luo FL11

THE NILOTIC KAVIRONDO.

By G. A. S. Northcote.

101 The Nilotic Kavirondo, or Jaluo as they should more properly be called, who inhabit the north-eastern shore of the Victoria Nyanza, belong to the same family as the great Dinka tribe of the Soudan and are near relations of the Aluri and Acholi tribes which live on both sides of the Nile near Wadlai, the differences being far less marked than those between two adjoining Bantu tribes usually are.

174 In all probability, therefore, the Jaluo originally formed one tribe with the Acholi. What their reasons for migration were cannot be ascertained, but probably it was due to overcrowding or to a dispute about the chieftaincy. The natives themselves can throw but little light on the matter: they state that they came from the north-west under one big chief and that when they again became too numerous they split up into smaller chieftaincies. The fact that they lay stress on their again increasing numbers points to the conclusion that overcrowding

[63] was their motive for migrating; but as will be seen later, they use secession as their chief weapon against an unpopular chief. Had they been driven out by conquest there would be abundant traces of such a cause, but no such signs are visible.

● 192 In appearance the Jaluo are a fine race, not so much remarkable for beauty of face as for stature and development. They are a large-boned and deep-chested tribe, somewhat fleshy and very muscular. They present a great contrast in this last respect to the other Nilotic tribes in British East Africa, the Masai, Nandi and Lumbwa. All four are capable of great endurance, but none of the last three named can claim to be a muscular race. The superior physique of the Jaluo is probably

[46] due mainly to their agricultural and industrial habits and to the fact that their food is mainly vegetable, while up to the great cattle plague of 1892, the Masai, Nandi and Lumbwa lived entirely upon animal food.

Facially the Kavirondo have rather sweet cones, large mouths and big wide-opened eyes. The everyday dress of the men consists of a goat skin hung over the

241 right shoulder, or of nothing. In most cases they have quantities of iron wire on

[30] their legs and arms and strings of beads round their necks. The women are usually completely nude, except that married women wear a small grass tassel behind, hanging from the waist; latterly, however, they have taken to wearing a strip of cloth round the waist about six or eight inches in breadth and only just meeting in front.

[51] The tassels are discarded when a woman's husband dies and cannot be again worn until she is re-married. It is significant of the respect which the Jaluo have

21:Huxley Q, T-5 (no date) 1960 FL11 Luo FL11
[PP.4-96 not Processed] Kikuyu FL10

CHAPTER 6

The Reluctant Luo

I

THE Luo are the second largest tribe in Kenya, coming next to the Kikuyu, and at the moment the most influential politically. This is because most Kikuyu politicians went into detention camps at the time of Mau Mau. While Kikuyu cats were away, Luo mice played vigorously, and grabbed the best political cheese. Speaking generally, the Luo are hefty, black-skinned, somewhat ox-like people with prominent teeth, a reputation for making good labourers and a rather slow-witted approach to life.

Needless to say, there are plenty of exceptions. Mr. Tom Mboya is a Luo and, while he has been called many things, 'slow-witted' has never been among them. Their natural food is fish and they are not by nature a cattle people. Their sturdy women smoke pipes with long clay stems. The Luo are not Bantu but Nilotic and their affinities, lingual and tribal, lie more with people in Uganda, such as the Acholi, than with any other Kenya tribes. They are surrounded, however, by Bantu peoples, with whom they share the wide, fertile, steamy and mainly flat basin that surrounds Lake Victoria. Around this basin lie hills from which warrior tribes look down on them, formerly as an eagle looked upon its prey. Far to the south lie the plains of Masai.

People who have dealt with other tribes find the Luo difficult. Their obstinacy is legendary, they are inclined to be sullen and suspicious. The Kikuyu can be all these things, but they are nimble-minded, subtle and, for those they like, have charm. Luo people can be brave and loyal but charm is rarely among their attributes. They are faintly Teutonic, in an African fashion.

So it is not surprising that of all the major Kenya peoples, leaving aside the Masai, the Luo have put up the stiffest